

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
ONE SOUTHPARK CIRCLE, SUITE 306
CHARLESTON, S.C. 29407-4699
TELEPHONE 803/571-4366 FAX 769-4520
E-mail: safmc@noaa.gov Web Site: www.safmc.nmfs.gov



News Release

RELEASE: IMMEDIATELY
CONTACT: SUSAN BUCHANAN
803/571-4366

February 19, 1998

The South Atlantic Council will hold public meetings March 2-6, 1998, at the Jekyll Island Club, 371 Riverview Drive, Jekyll Island, GA; telephone: (912) 635-2600.

Council to Approve Habitat Protection Management Actions for Public Hearing

The South Atlantic Council has paved the way nationally in the cooperative effort to identify, describe, and protect essential fish habitat through the development of a Habitat Plan and an Amendment to all existing council fishery management plans.

Last year the council conducted ten habitat workshops as an information gathering tool, bringing in technical habitat experts from the state, federal and regional levels to compile existing resources and information regarding the various issues associated with essential fish habitat in this region.

Realizing that fishing is not the only threat associated with declining fish stocks, Congress mandated the councils to identify where the habitats exist which are essential to a fish population's survival, and possibly designate habitat areas of particular concern for each species under the council's management jurisdiction. In addition, this legislation mandates the council regulate the fishery to reduce fishing impacts on such habitats.

Many of the habitats associated with spawning and larvae distribution exist in state jurisdictions, and the South Atlantic Council has already in place regulatory measures to preserve essential fish habitat in federal waters in this region, such as the prohibition of bottom tending trawls, bottom longlines, and fish traps. However, the council is proposing some additional regulatory measures to reduce fishing impacts on essential fish habitat in the South Atlantic.

The council will review the Habitat Plan and Amendment in March, and if approved, will take the measures to public hearing in June, 1998.

For more information on proposed actions in the Habitat Plan and Amendment, contact Susan Buchanan at the council office (803) 571-4366.

Setting Annual Wreckfish Quota on Council Agenda

The council is scheduled to set the annual catch limits for the South Atlantic wreckfish fishery, which is managed under the individual transferable quota (ITQ) system, at the March meeting.

Overall catch in the fishery has declined in recent years, although mean catch per trip rose by about 400 pounds last year, and only twelve percent of last year's two million pound quota was taken by the seven active shareholders in the fishery.

The Snapper Grouper Assessment Group recommended maintaining the two million pound quota for the coming fishing year, with close monitoring of the fishery since catch and effort statistics are very sensitive to sampling error due to the small number of participants in the fishery.

Council to Begin Developing Criteria for Marine Reserves

The council is currently on a fact gathering mission about the concept and use of fishing area closures world-wide, and will address this issue at the March meeting in Jekyll Island, Georgia.

The newly formed Marine Reserves Committee will review recommendations from the scientific community, which seem to indicate that closed areas would greatly benefit over-fished stocks, and consider fishermen compliance and law enforcement factors if the council were to move forward with developing marine reserves in this area.

The council has scheduled a workshop in conjunction with its June meeting in St. Augustine, Florida, to further explore marine reserves as a management tool, and will appoint members to the Marine Reserves Advisory Panel at that time.

For further information, contact Susan Buchanan at (803) 571-4366.

Council's March Meeting Agenda

March 2, 1998, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon

Mackerel Committee;

The Committee will consider comments on Mackerel Amendment 9, develop recommendations for final approval or disapproval of measures in Amendment 9, hear the status of Mackerel Amendment 8 and the seasonal framework actions, and hear the status of Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel quotas.

March 2, 1998, 1:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Joint Habitat Committee and Habitat and Coral Advisory Panels;

The Committee and Advisory Panels will review and provide comments on the draft Habitat Fishery Management Plan and draft Comprehensive habitat Amendment, and hear a summary of the American Fisheries Society report on the impact of fishing gear on habitat.

March 3, 1998, 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon; 1:30 p.m. to 4:30

p.m.

Habitat Committee;

The Committee will develop committee recommendations on the draft Habitat Fishery Management Plan and the draft Comprehensive Amendment.

March 3, 1998, 5:00 p.m.

Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Scoping Meeting;

The purpose of this scoping meeting is to provide the public an opportunity to express their views on ways to improve commercial and recreational fisheries data collection.

March 4, 1998, 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Joint Snapper Grouper Committee and Wreckfish Advisory Panel;

The Committee and Advisory Panel will review the most updated catch data for this fishery, review the Assessment Group report, develop advisory panel and committee recommendations for setting seasonal quotas and other framework measures.

March 4, 1998, 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

Snapper Grouper Committee;

The Committee will develop recommendations for final approval/disapproval of special management zone requests.

March 4, 1998, 1:30 p.m. to 5:00

Snapper Grouper Committee;

The Committee will hear the scamp stock assessment report,

and a report on the updated trends and spawning potential ratio analysis, review and take action on the Stock Assessment Group report, review the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary request, and develop recommendations for appointment of snapper grouper assessment group members in closed session.

March 5, 1998, 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Marine Reserves Committee;

The Committee will review the Assessment Group and Law Enforcement Committee and Advisory Panel recommendations on criteria for marine reserves, begin developing criteria, and discuss how the council may coordinate with the NOAA Sanctuary Program.

March 5, 1998:

Council Session - The full Council will convene to:

From 11:00 a.m. 12:00 noon

Hear the Marine Reserves Committee report;

From 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Hear the Mackerel Committee report and take public comment on Mackerel Amendment 9 at 1:30 p.m. before approving or disapproving Amendment 9.

From 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Take public comment on the Special Management Zone requests and Wreckfish framework measures before taking action on the SMZ requests and the wreckfish framework measures.

From 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Address measures to be included in the Magnuson-Stevens Act Generic Amendment, and approve the amendment for public hearing;

From 4:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Hear the status of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council/Atlantic States Marine Fishery Commission Amendment to the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan;

March 6, 1998, 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Council Session

The full Council will convene to approve the Habitat Fishery Management Plan and Comprehensive Amendment management options for public hearing, make Council recommendations on the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, hear reports on the status of the Golden Crab Framework, the Council's request to manage dolphin-fish and wahoo, the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Panel meeting and the Billfish Advisory Panel meeting, agency and liaison reports and other business.

Secretary Approves Council's Limited Entry Program for Snapper Grouper Fishery

The council has received a letter from Dr. Andrew Kemmerer, Southeast Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service, stating that the Secretary of Commerce approved the limited entry portion of Snapper Grouper Amendment 8; however, the council's overfishing definition was disapproved.

The limited entry program will be fully implemented by the end of the year, and fishermen who do not meet the criteria for access to the fishery will not be eligible for a permit. The National Marine Fisheries Service will send a notice to all current snapper grouper permit holders when the final rule implementing Amendment 8 is published in the Federal Register. Snapper grouper permit holders should be alert to this change in the fishery.

Other Meetings

Public Meeting of the Federal Investment Task Force

The Federal Investment Task Force is conducting a public meeting March 5-7, 1998 at the Ramada Airport Inn, 5303 West Kennedy Boulevard, Tampa, Florida. This will be the Task Force's second of five scheduled meetings. The meeting times will be as follows:

Thursday, March 5	1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. (Public Comment Period)
Friday, March 6	8:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Saturday, March 7	8:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

The Sustainable Fisheries Act (P.L. 94-265) requires the Secretary of Commerce to establish a task force to study the role of the Federal Government in subsidizing fleet capacity and influencing capital investment in fisheries. The Task Force consists of 22 individuals that represent commercial and recreational fishing interests, environmental groups, academic interests, and professional interests.

The Task Force will study Federal programs and policies that may have directly influenced fleet capacity and capitalization, as well as programs that created an environment that is/was conducive to an increase in capacity and capital investments. An evaluation of programs that are aimed at reducing fleet capacity and capitalization will also be included in the report to Congress. The final report of the Task Force must be submitted to Congress by October 11, 1998.

This public meeting is intended to provide an opportunity for fishermen's organizations, environmental groups, and interested individuals in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions to meet with the Task Force. The Task Force will invite representatives from various groups to make presentations and will also will provide an opportunity for public comment.

Any interested parties may attend the Tampa meeting and written input will be accepted, preferably prior to the meeting. Due to time limitations, public comment at the open microphone portion of the meeting on March 5 will be limited to 5 minutes per person. Comments should be limited to issues related to the Task Force's study. For additional information (Task Force roster, legislative mandate, meeting agenda, etc.) about this project, please contact Bob Beal at (202) 289-6400.

During this meeting the Task Force will focus on general capacity and capitalization issues in Southeastern and Gulf of Mexico fisheries. Some of the specific Federal programs that may be discussed are: Farm Credit Administration, Economic Development Administration, U.S. tax policies, and Americanization of fisheries.

National Marine Fisheries Service to Hold a Public Hearing on Individual Fishing Quotas

In conjunction with the council's March meeting in Jekyll Island, Georgia, the National Marine Fisheries Service is holding a public meeting on Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQs), in compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

The following topics are open for comment at this hearing:

- Effects of limiting or prohibiting transfer of quotas;
- Mechanisms to prevent foreign control of harvest of US fisheries under IFQs;
- Effective monitoring and enforcement;
- Assessing potential social and economic costs and benefits to the nation and to IFQ recipients, including the value created for IFQ recipients.

**The hearing will be held March 3, 1998 at 7:00
p.m.
at:**

**The Jekyll Island Club
371 Riverview Drive
Jekyll Island, GA;
(912) 635-2600**

Participants will be given five minutes each to provide a statement regarding any aspect of IFQ implementation identified in the study requirements of the Act. All input will be provided to the for use in preparation of its study of a national policy with respect to IFQs.

For questions regarding the hearing, contact Joseph Kimmel, Southeast regional office, National Marine Fisheries Service, at (813) 570-5305.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional councils, conserves and manages fish stocks from three to 200 miles off shore of North and South Carolina, Georgia and east Florida.



A publication of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council pursuant to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award No. NA87FC0004.